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A Weekly Publication

OF

# SERMONS

PREACHED BY

# HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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# THE NEW INCARNATION.

"And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us."—MATT. I., 23. "And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."—JNO. I., 14.

The mystery of the Incarnation will never be solved in this world. The elements comprising it lie beyond the reach of the human intellect. We do not understand the nature of the power of spiritual existence. We cannot, therefore, solve the problems arising upon the statement that the Spirit was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and was of us, and yet not of us. It is evident that in the day of the Saviour, and among those to whom the message first came, there was no difficulty, because they accepted it as a fact, without attempting an analysis—without any philosophical inquisition. And so it still is easy to accept the statement. In all our childhood we believe that God was manifest in the flesh, and that Jesus Christ was God on earth—Emmanuel—God with us. And in all the earlier stages of youthful Christian experience our thoughts gather around about that sacred center, and our hearts are drawn out with gratitude and with love; and the recurring anniversaries bring joy and gratulation, and not trouble. It is only afterward, when we begin to ponder how the infinite, which is a distinguishing mark of God, could be compassed by the finite; it is only when we begin to read the articles of faith which have been propounded by the church of past ages, and are told that Christ had two souls—one a man's, and the other a God's, and that they cöexisted, and were mingled, each retaining its identity—it is only then that we have difficulty. And on turning to the Word of God we find no light. There we find simply the statement which our childhood believed, that God was manifested in the flesh; that he took upon him our nature; that he lived on earth under the same conditions which we do, and died, and went home to glory. But we accepted this

*A Christmas Sermon.* SUNDAY MORNING, Dec. 24, 1871. Lesson: MATT. II. Hymns (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 228, 206, 203.

statement without analysis; without philosophical illustration; without raising any question as to *how*. We can believe, if we do not undertake, according to modern ideas, to interpret the details of the divine nature, and of that economy which we celebrate to-day of the advent and incarnation. We do know that the coming of God upon earth had reasons of benefit which we cannot discern. If we look at the thing itself, and ask to know exactly how the event could be, we shall get darkness, and not light.

But if, accepting the event, without attempting to understand all its parts and particulars, we inquire whether there was benefit from such a dwelling of God on earth among men, which makes it probable and easy to believe, then we do find light. Such an earthly residence of Divinity among men would impart to us far more influential views of God than could have been obtained by any other method. God as revealed in nature men more or less understood. They believed in him as the Governor of nations, and as a tutelary god of a single or special nation; but God as moving among men in all the offices of human life, revealed under labor, and care, and suffering; revealed as one familiar in affectional and social relations, and interlacing himself with men's thoughts and affinities as man does with man; revealed as Emmanuel, God with us, like us, dwelling among us—that was, if I may so say, a domestic revelation—a revelation of disposition rather than of attribute. The self-sacrificing spirit, the suffering spirit, the interposition of one's own self for another that deserved the stroke—these are revelations—not by words, but by deeds—and are calculated to kindle in the soul a notion of God's personality and of his loveableness which could scarcely be imagined to come to the human race in any other way.

We may point to the results which have followed the incarnation, as a revelation of God's nature, in comparison with the former kinds of piety which prevailed in the Jewish church, as an authentication of these reasonings. For, although there were among the Jews, here and there, one by one, Isaiahs, and Jeremiahs, and Davids, and such like characters, that shot far above ordinary men, and that were held, not simply in reverence and fear, but also in love and admiration, as genial and noble, the great body of the Jewish people never attained to this plane. It is in Christian eras that we find a new style of piety: not sacrificial service; not formal obedience; but a passionate personal love, and an enthusiastic faith. We find a kind of piety under Christ which became a victorious faith among men. It was an entirely different style of apprehending the divine nature and the divine character, following what we have said would be likely to be the effect of an incarnation—a manifesta-

tion in the flesh—as a mode of revealing God's interior and domestic disposition.

Before God's nature was disclosed by Jesus Christ, while yet he was regarded as a Monarch, and not as a Father, there were not wanting teachings of his compassion to the poor and lowly; but they were the teachings of the noblest natures. They never became a common matter of instruction or belief.

After Christ came and dwelt among men, and suffered for them, and rose again to rule over them, he became an object of the intensest admiration and affection, and of the most passionate love, not so much among the intelligent, not in the loftiest natures, but in the lowliest. As he was himself poor, and lived among them, and came for them—that is, for the great mass of mankind; so, after the times of the apostles, it was chiefly among the poor that there broke out that intense love for God and for holiness which was never known before among the masses. Among the slaves; among the prisoners; among those who were shut up as a testimony of their fidelity to their moral convictions; among men who were in despondency, who were oppressed, who were ignorant; among all with whom the world went hard; among those from whose hands riches were slipping, or from whom health was departing; among those, in other words, who were low in every sense—among all those there was found an intense conception of God's power, and mercy, and personal love. And they clung to the Lord Jesus Christ with a peculiar affection, such as we do not find developed toward Jehovah.

If it were therefore in the order of time, in the course of development, the purpose of God to make known his love and mercy and grace through Jesus Christ, we see how wise, in the fulfillment of that purpose, was the divine economy.

Dismissing, then, any attempt to understand how God should become clothed in the human body; accepting the statement, and rejoicing in it as the wisest and most probable solution of the question, How can men come near to God?—let us believe that nearly two thousand years ago there lived in Galilee for many years, One who, being equal with God, had subjected himself to the whole human condition, from its lowest weakness, through the process of evolution, to its fullest manhood; that for men he suffered; that for men he lived; that in himself he revealed to men the truest conception of the divine nature that the world has ever seen, or that it can receive; and that having fulfilled his mission, he went up again, and stands to-day a Prince and a Saviour at the right hand of God.

But we are not to dismiss the advent and the incarnation simply

with this historic statement. The disciples were taught that the personal Christ would be withdrawn from them; that the Lord was to go away out of the world because it was best for them—best for them as representatives of the church universal. But at the same time they were taught that he never would leave the world; that he would abide in it.

"I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

There was, in other words, taught to them what might be drawn out and called substantially the doctrine of the secondary incarnation: not precisely a personal incarnation, but something which may very well be considered a new fulfillment of the first one.

This is a thought which may engage our attention this morning —*the secondary and plenary incarnation of God among men.*

As much as ever, God is in the world by wisdom, by power, by government, and by providence; but there is such a thing as the growth of men themselves into the divine Spirit; or, as the apostle styles it, *Christ in you the hope of glory.*

Besides the coming and the incarnation of Christ as a grand central, historical fact, two thousand years ago, we may, without any great stretching of the literal language of Scripture, teach that Christ is still coming in every generation, that a process of incarnation is ever going on, that the Christ Spirit is growing in men from generation to generation.

Consider the remarkable and intense teaching of our Master in the fifteenth chapter of John. Consider his unity, his presence, his identity with his people. Although we may say that that is the language which is natural to love, I think we may interpret from it something more than that.

Regarding it as true in all times, there is a large thought in this —that Christ is steadily growing into human nature and into the human character. This is going on now. It is a slow growth, to be sure. It has been slow through the centuries. Nevertheless, there is a process of divine incarnation still going on: not in the same way as in the first and historic incarnation; but the spirit of God is gradually entering in, and transforming the human spirit. Human society, its laws, its customs, its business, its procedures, its whole moral condition, usually reflect the average condition of mankind They are the engines for the regulation and the building up of humanity. There is a gradual process derived from the heart and spirit of those who frame and those who employ human institutions by which they are imbued with a nobler and a higher character.

If you look upon the forms of society, they represented, in the earliest day, physical force. This was the foundation of law, for the

most part. It was the nature of government. Gradually, however, human governments and institutions began to represent the lower forms of wisdom—namely, the wisdom of physical elements. They became more minute; more skillfully adapted to the conditions of men; more helpful. Still further, they began to develop an element of justice and of humanity. There came to be more and more noble laws and institutions throughout the world. The moral and spiritual was always that which was most defective in them. It is that in which all the framework of government, of laws, of institutions, of the customs and polities of society, is still defective.

We have seen the world growing in its individuals, in its laws, and in its institutions. The growth has been from the lower and physical forces up, gradually, through the intellectual and social, toward the moral. We stand on the edge and verge of the great final development in which laws and institutions will represent, not the lower nature, but the very highest spiritual nature of man, and minister to it.

As yet, the higher feelings of man have not been strong enough to counterbalance the great and universal development, in society, of the physical forces of man; but gradually the moral and spiritual elements will come up, and man will become nobler and purer, and there will be a more effectual development of manhood out of animalhood. Churches will be more radiant centers. They will be less disputatious, less formal, less given to questions of reverence and obedience; and they will be more addicted to sympathy. They will be more genial. They will have more personal attractions. The love-element will be more developed in them. Public charities will predominate more and more, and will have wider scope. The great humanities of life will prevail throughout society. Little by little the industries of life, its commerce, all its forms of occupation, will rise in the scale. Even politics, or the administration of public affairs, will feel the divine inspiration.

There will come a time when men will live no longer in their lower nature, but predominantly in their higher. And they will live in that higher nature by the precepts and under the inspiration of the divine spirit. And so men shall intermingle their life with the universal divine life. That which is noblest and best in thought and feeling will then be that which shall shine into them, by reason of their susceptibility to receive the divine impulse—the divine in-breathing.

And when the time shall come, not in single individuals here and there, nor merely in groups, but in whole communities, that men are lifted up, their laws will come up with them. That which is best

will prevail, and that which prevailed in earlier periods, and which is superseded by those higher developments, will go into desuetude, or will be sloughed off by this moral progress. Human affairs will be administered in nobler ways. Better policies will arise, with a wiser and discreeter beneficence in them. I believe that the time will come when even governments, the hardest and the last element to be subdued to equity and humanity, will be conducted according to the spirit which prevails in the church, in the household, and in the hospital. The time will come when governments shall not be mighty hammers breaking one another in pieces; when they shall not be organized armies. The time shall come when kings and queens shall be nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers in the world.

When the whole of society shall be so far leavened with the Christ-spirit in its outward processes and inward tendencies that it may be said that Christ is incarnated again among men, then I suppose will come to pass that which is predicted, the ushering in of a *new heaven and a new earth.* When it shall come to pass that the predominant tendencies among men, among nations, in all the organizations of society, social, political, and economic, shall be according to the spirit and temper of Christ, then shall be Christ's second coming. It shall be a coming again, not in his person, but in his spirit; not as a form, but as a universal animation of the great household of faith. And when, in the last days, this is accomplished, there shall be one church, one nation, one family.

Toward this second Incarnation of Christ the eyes of all men are turned; and for it the hearts of all men do wait.

The degree of progress which this incarnation has made and is making cannot be a matter of indifference to those who believe in it. We can form only an approximate judgment on this subject. The relative force of physical and basilar life compared with that of moral and spiritual life in the race-stock is a matter that would require, for any accurate statement, far more time and far more investigation than I have been able to give it. Nevertheless, the question is one which is worthy of being raised: Has the race-stock risen since the time of Christ? I should say, No, if you count; but Yes, if you weigh. I do not know that numerically there is now a larger part of the globe developed in the direction of intellectual and spiritual forces than there was in the time of Christ. And yet, the civilized nations, I take it, are far higher and far more influential than they were in Christ's day. If you institute a comparison of the Roman and Grecian and Oriental civilizations with the mediæval even, and still more with the modern civilization, I think it will be plain that modern civilization is of a higher kind; that

there are involved in it elements which were utterly unknown in ancient times; and that it comprehends conservative and preservative elements which give it a chance to endure, which did not belong to those earlier civilizations. The civilizations of former times lacked a general moral basis. Modern civilization is based upon morals. And certainly under civilization in modern days great multitudes of men have risen to a height which never was attained by the masses in the olden time.

We glean, and glean, and glean the books of the best men of antiquity to find sentences and sentiments indicating the conception of a higher moral condition; and here and there there is a gleam of light—one from Socrates, one from Plato, one from Cicero, and so on down; but now we find hundreds of thousands of men, we find church after church, and we find even states, pervaded with principles which scarcely dawned as a glimmer in the old civilizations.

The relative Incarnation into society-forms of the nobler part of human nature has been going on and on. The standard of morals, on the whole, has risen in modern civilization, as compared with former civilizations, and is still rising. No matter what temporary corruptions there may be in single nations; no matter what periods there may be of back-slidings in the world, on the whole the tide is steadily rising and rising toward higher conceptions of duty; toward a larger standard of humanity; toward a nobler sentiment of purity.

The world is growing in its school of morals. And although there is infinite opposition on the part of men to their own standards, although men are breaking down and breaking away, although there is resistance where there ought to be encouragement, although, in other words, men do not at all live up to their ideals, the ideals are growing clearer and clearer, and under their light and influence the relative moral character is all the time going up, and the great developments of society in the right direction are increasing.

For example, compare the condition of modern art with the condition of the art of antiquity, and it will be found that whatever art has lost in form, it has gained in character. No hand, it is probable, will ever shape such noble temples as were shaped in the past. Ancient architecture will scarcely be surpassed as an art of beauty. The ancients seem to have found the ultimate limit of human skill in that direction. Nor can we, since even the secondary models of the days of Phidias are the despair of modern days, suppose that modern art will ever surpass or touch forms that are given to us in sculpture. If you look at painting it will be found, I think, that the

modern productions in that department are inferior to the ancient. And yet it cannot be denied that art has received its true character in modern days. While art in stone or on canvas in ancient times represented, comparatively speaking, ignoble ideas, modern art is made to represent something far better than these. For our art, like our power, is distributive. It is not so much the skill of single men to create a cathedral or a temple that we see in modern times: it is the skill of millions of men. And in the masses skill has gone up many, many degrees above what was known in antiquity, in the creation of domestic abodes, dwelling-houses. It is not that we can cut so fair a statue as they of old did, that we regard as such a cause for gratulation, but that we have a conception of universal adornment in manners, in customs, in furniture, in the whole economy of living. We carry out and spread the conception of beauty through the mass of myriads of families, while the ancients concentrated it in a picture, or a temple, or a statue. We distribute it upon harness, upon vehicle, upon house, upon carpet, upon window, upon garden.

If the spirit of beauty in antiquity be compared with the spirit of beauty in modern times, there has been an immense growth. And when men say that we are vastly inferior, under Christian influences, to the ancients and the heathen, in art, I say, Yes, if you mean by *art* physical perfections of form; but if you mean art for human purposes, and for civilizing, Christianizing reasons, I say that in modern times art transcends immeasurably what art was in ancient times.

It is this diffusive art, it is this art which acts as a sweetener of life, it is this art which is a light in the dwellings of the poor, it is this art which gilds care, and goes with a man night and day, as an element of refinement and beauty in all his industrial relations, instead of art concentrated and limiting its blessings to the few, as was the case with the art of antiquity—it is this art that has been developed by the influence of Christianity; and it is just what we might expect Christianity to develop.

When, therefore, men mourn that the day of cathedrals is gone, I cannot mourn with them. I am glad that there was such a day; but I am glad that there is no longer such a day; for we have something that is better than cathedrals. It is well that they have been builded; but they are no longer of use. Their functions are spent; and we have gone on building cathedrals of men. We have commonwealths and communities that transcend them. And not only have we noble men, but if you take all the architecture which belongs to our civic and domestic relations, there is more skill, more

beauty, more admirable convenience, bestowed in the community on the dwellings of the poor, than was found in the noblest cathedrals in the world, not excepting those at Milan, and Antwerp, and Cologne, and York. In former times they built cathedrals, and let men live in mud hovels. We build no cathedrals, and our poor men live in good houses. And art is more developed now, though in another way, than it ever was before. As God, when he was worshiped as Jehovah, had an element of grandeur about him, especially to the Jews who claimed that they were his peculiar people, but in the revelation of Jesus became distributive, and was the world's Saviour, and was accessible not to the priest alone, but to all; so art, when it was exalted above the reach of common men, was grand, but in modern times is distributed and is the property of everybody. It is developed in all directions; and there never was a time in the history of the world when it was doing so much as it is doing now. To be sure, we have no Raphaels any more; to be sure, we have no Michael Angelos any more; but where, in the whole realm of mediæval art, can you find, with the exception, perhaps, of the works of Titian, a picture that shows that the hearts of men looked over the face of nature, and felt that *the heavens declared the glory of God, and that the firmament showed his handwork?*

Look at the school of landscape-painting in America. There is more sympathy with God's creation in that than in the whole mediæval school of painting put together. What if the mediæval painters could paint figure-pictures better than we can? The question is not one of mere formative power. It is not a question simply of the technics of art. The question is, "Has the spirit of Christ grown in art? Is Christian art higher than it was in the time of Christ, or in the mediæval ages? Has it a mission? and is it about that mission? I say that it is carrying refinement and comfort and joy as it never did, and never knew how to do, or, if it knew how, did not have the means of doing, in earlier periods.

Still more striking is the development of the Christ-spirit in literature. If you look at the literature of antiquity, you will find the same condition which was that of the art of antiquity—that it was exquisite and beautiful in form, but utterly lacking in the elements of humanity and of profound spirituality. From the time of Christ down to our day, we have seen in literature a steady progress. It has slowly learned its functions. It has little by little cleansed itself. It has learned to become the expression of that very spirit of love to God and love to man which is the essential nature of true religion. And, to-day, as never before in

any age, literature may be said to be evangelizing. If you compare literature to-day with what it was in the times of Dryden, and Pope, and Swift, you will find that then there was a most degrading sense of homage to those who were in power and to those who were wealthy. The very dedications are enough to sicken our sense of manliness. Accompanying this, you will find the most stinging and contemptuous allusions to the ignorant and the poor, as a great, vulgar rabble. There was no heart that felt for man unless he had a scepter in his hand, or money in his pocket, among the writers of a hundred and fifty or two hundred years ago. But how is it to-day? Literature seems to be pervaded with that spirit which the Advent rung in; and those very songs which sounded in the heaven, are going out in music again from thousands of sources. The message, *Good will to men*, is now being sent forth in poems and in histories. This feeling of catholic humanity, this justice founded on a spirit of love, is pervading the schools of literature. And although there are here and there exceptional schools, yet in the main the literature of the day breathes a spirit of humanity. Dickens's books, though they are not theological or religious, are books which are in strange and admirable harmony with this message, *Good will to men.* And Thackeray's books are scarcely less so. The schools of novelists that swarm the earth are more or less under the influence of this same universal spirit.

If you look at the conduct of affairs among nations, it would seem, at first glance, as if the Christ-spirit were never before so far from governments as it is to-day. Yet, there are signs and tokens that that spirit is growing even among nations. Certainly there is a humanity in war which was never known before. There is an unparalleled destructiveness; but there is a corresponding humanity. The laws of war are becoming more and more stringent to restrain excesses. And the cruelties of the camp are alleviated by a strange beneficence, organized and universal, which gives a color of romance, now, to a campaign. That uprising of our whole people, and that descending of organized women into the camp, as angels of mercy following the bloody footsteps of the soldiers everywhere, to bind up their woumds, and to minister to them when they were sick or dying—that has been an example to Europe; and in the late savage and terrific wars on the Continent there have been alleviations of humanity which have been unknown in any former campaigns. And may we not believe that that tendency which has been struggling for twenty-five or thirty years to show itself—the tendency of nations to adopt some methods by which wars may be turned aside—is going to prevail? May we not accept that ten-

dency—which has been growing like all growths, with recessions and increments, and which has expressed itself in that noble treaty which has been made between Great Britain and America,—as one of the signs and tokens of a better era? When two great kindred Christian nations, that hold in their hands the power of the world more nearly than any others, between whom had arisen causes of war which a hundred years ago would have set the globe on fire, came together as rational peoples, and agreed to leave out to cool and calm arbitrament their differences, and accept the results, may we not believe that again that angel-song broke out:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men?"

Although there is so much that, if looked at upon the outside, staggers men, and leads them to say, "There has been no improvement in the conduct of nations"; yet, if you look upon the interior, and see how all spiritual elements are working their way in forms of justice and mercy, and in more rational forms of administration, I think you cannot but see that Christ is coming even in human governments. The incarnation, which we see much of in art and literature, we may see in public administrations also.

Nay, more; if you look under governments into the economies of life, and see how all things now—all production, all distribution, all exchange, all forms of public procedure—are obliged to pay toll and tax to the convenience of the poor and helpless; if you see how amusements themselves are obliged to key their offerings to the necessities of the mass; if you see how wealth, notwithstanding its power to hold the community, has to pay regard to the great want and need of the masses of mankind, I think you cannot but feel that there is progress in that which Christ sought to establish on the earth. His mission was the bringing down the throne under the hut. It was not the conjunction of divine power with earthly power. It was not glory from above flaming glory from the hills of Judæa upon those who were below. It was the divine power humbling itself. It was the divine power putting itself below the least human nature. It was the lending that which was supremest to the uses of that which which was the lowest.

Such was the grand secret of the advent of Christ. And that same spirit is leavening amusements, occupations and economies of every kind, and getting possession of them more and more

The incarnation, then, is going on. The Christ-spirit is manifesting itself in many forms. That spirit is gaining in the civilized nations of the globe to-day. And it is for us to pray, *Thy kingdom come in all these directions.* It is for us to enter heartily into the

spirit of Christ. It is for us to pray for the advent and for the incarnation in all these great practical and organic forms in human society, until the name of Christ shall be a point of union among his disciples, and not of repulsion, as hitherto it has been. For, strangely, that yearning man who stood praying in Jerusalem that all might be one in him, as he was one with the Father, has been, with his teaching and example, the grand point of repulsion from which sects have sprung out and organized themselves with mutual antagonisms. And around about the sacred name of Christ has raged the theological battles of centuries.

Tell me not that it is a spirit which cares less for religion. Tell me not that it is a spirit of wantonness which is throwing off many of the shackles of the church. Tell me not that it is a spirit of disobedience, and that it cares nothing for reverence. I see in the relaxations which are going on the preliminary steps which are going to lead to another glorious union of those elements which, though they are in and of themselves harmonious, have by hereditary and other causes been divided. They are combined, in different directions, with elements which prevent their union. And until there is some kind of disintegration, it does not seem to me possible that they can be joined together.

Let us pray, then, that the spirit which we see going on, and in which God employs, as it were, the outward progress of nature, science helping it, may be consummated. Let us pray, not that there may be less of devout faith and worship, nor that there may be less of intellectual activity concerning the themes of religion; but that there may be more of that charity which shall permit men who are divided to unite as one heart in praise around about the throne of Christ. And may we continue this prayer, and may this work go on, until Jesus Christ shall develop among his followers elements which shall predominate over all intellectual elements, and piety shall be more than doctrine, life more than belief, and pity and kindness and goodness equivalent to orthodoxy; until men shall come together by the heart, and not by excogitating formulas; until there shall be a peculiar, universal, personal sympathy which shall make the living God more real and more influential among men than churches are, than the Bible is, than any instruments are, or than any ordinances can be; until again we have Emmanuel—God with us—dwelling among us, invoked by our consciousness and by our prayers, wrought into our experience, flowing out on the stream of our emotions, and made ubiquitous and universal by the commingling of those who love his appearing; until the day shall come when Christ shall give his spirit to the mother, to the child, to

the household, to the neighborhood, to every mechanic in his vocation, to all who run to and fro preparing to make wealth; until in the ship, and on the sea, and in the settlements on the furthest frontier, and in all forms of society, that justice which love breeds shall become more and more triumphant; until all art shall be a gospel; until literature itself shall be a many-tongued and polyglot gospel; until states shall give their power, their laws and institutions to the promotion of that which is highest and truest and most beneficent among men; until the whole earth shall be redeemed by the power of that which is spiritual and divine, and Christ shall come to reign a thousand years.

Look not back, then, for eighteen hundred years alone to think of the Advent and the Incarnation. The grand historical elements of it stand out illustrious, and worthy of our profound remembrance, and of our gratitude; but remember that Christ is always coming, and is seeking to incarnate himself perpetually, and that down through the ages he is still knocking at the door of men's hearts, too often coming to his own when his own receive him not, but, nevertheless, finding some who receive him, and to whom he gives power to become the sons of God. And let us rejoice that in our day his sway seems to be extending, and that in more parts of society, and in more languages, men are rising up into the atmosphere and spirit of the true Christ. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly!

## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

O Lord, our God, we give thanks to thee for that disclosure which thou hast made of thy being and of thy attributes in the world that is around about us. We thank thee that thou hast still more developed thy nature among men, and through them. Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But chiefly through thy Son Jesus hast thou made known to us thine eternal Godhead. We rejoice that now thou art not to us power or wisdom in chief, but goodness. We rejoice that thou hast made manifest, not that which nature teaches, but that which nature could not teach—thy mercy; thy pity; thy recovering love. We are redeemed from fear by the revelation of thy love. By thy sacrifice of thine own self we are assured of the fervor and the endurance of thy compassion and of thy mercy.

We desire, this day, to join all that around the world make mention of thy goodness. We desire to mingle our joy with the universal joy.—And we pray for that enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit by which we may mount up into thoughts which are fit for this day, and for thee, thou Saviour of mankind. For thy coming; for thine earthly residence; for all thy words; for all thy deeds; for thy patience; for thy suffering; for thy death; for thy resurrection unto life and power; and for thine ascension to the source of all power again, we render thee thanksgiving this joyful day.

We are glad that thou art not upon the earth and circumscribed. We rejoice that thou art in heaven a Prince and a Saviour: on earth the poorest among the poor; in heaven the richest among the rich, full of power, and full of glory, which thou dost give forth as the sun gives light. Thou art the Sun of our hope and of our joy; and we hail thee through the memories of this day; through all its sacred associations; through all those thoughts which we have inherited from the men who have gone before, and who have been taught by the Spirit.

Now, O Lord, we desire to give ourselves to thee a sacrifice in love. We desire to be baptized in thy Spirit; to know how to subdue everything that is offensive to thee in ourselves; to know how to rise above the animal life, and mount up into the divine life; and how to be filled with wisdom and power, with gentleness and love. We desire to live in the spiritual realm, and to discern the invisible qualities of truth in the existences which are around about us. We desire to be more in the Spirit of the Lord. And we pray that thou wilt grant that we may be touched, this day, with the rising light of thy coming. In places where thou hast not illumined us, may our natures be perfectly subdued to thy will. May we behold thy coming, this day, for victory. Enter into our souls. Dispossess there whatever is proud, and jealous, and envious, and hateful, and rule in every heart and in every disposition, by thine own power of divine love.

We pray that thou wilt comfort, to-day, all who mourn in their disappointments, and bereavements, and under the heavy load of sorrow to which thou hast appointed them. And grant that as their day is their strength may be also. Over against their sorrows may they behold the bow of God full of promise.

We pray that thou wilt draw near to all who are detained from thine house to-day by sickness, or by watching with the sick. We pray that they may have a sanctuary borne into them; that they may have a house of God within them. In their own hearts may there be a temple and an altar, and there may a sacrifice go up.

We pray that thou wilt draw near to all those who belong to us, but who in thy providence are separated from us, upon the sea, in distant countries,

or scattered up and down through this vast land. O Lord, may their thoughts and ours be gathered together in one place to-day—even in the heavenly temple. And grant that wherever they are, the blessings which we solicit for ourselves may rest upon them.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all those who are endeavoring to follow their Master in self-denial, and in laboring for those who are lower than they. May all who teach be themselves taught and blessed in the words of truth. May all who go forth into the byways, to minister to the neglected, to the outcast, to the criminal, to the vicious, bear the healing Spirit of God with them. And as they water others, may they find themselves refreshed.

We pray that thy strength may be given to all thy ministers to-day; and that they may preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Grant that thy sanctuaries may be filled as with a summer. And in the midst of the season of winter grant that there may go forth unto us such thought of growth, and newness, and gladness, that all the outward shall be hidden; that by our souls we shall discern the new heaven and the new earth in which dwell righteousness, and universal joy, and peace, and prosperity. And at last banish from the world all evil. Open the pit, and sweep therein all tormenting spirits. Let fall again the stone which shall seal for a thousand years. And grant that the whole earth may rest and rejoice in the Lord.

We ask these things, not in our own name, but in His name who died for us. And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit shall be praises immortal. *Amen.*

## PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thou wilt bless the word which has been spoken. Grant that we may enter into its spirit. Grant that we may have faith to discern that which we cannot discern by sight. Grant that we may see the signs and tokens of thy coming on earth, and rejoice therein with sacred joy. May our hearts be attuned by divine love. May we carry about with us the spirit of Christ everywhere; and may we seek everywhere to give Him admission. And may He abide with us. And so grant that we may, as it were, walk with Him in his earthly ministry again. And when we shall have fulfilled his will upon earth, may we be counted worthy to be ranked among his followers in the heavenly land, where we shall behold him no longer as through a glass dimly, but face to face, and shall know Him even as we are known by Him. And to thy name shall be praises, Father, Son and Spirit, evermore. *Amen.*

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